

**Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)**

**Monday, January 27, 2020**

**Alabama Industrial Development Training Center**

The AIACC met on Monday, January 27, 2020, at the Alabama Industrial Development Training Center. The meeting was called to order by AIACC Member Justin Schwartz. Also in attendance were Council members: Fred Biasini, Robert Caldwell, Tametria Conner, Suzanne Dowling, Megan Everett, Erich Grommet, Heather Jones, Darryle Powell, and Constance Rice-Johnson. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Beverly Churchwell for Stephanie Azar, Eliza Belle for Lynn Beshear, Nancy Thomas for Lucian Cronkite, Laurie Eldridge-Auffant on behalf of Scott Harris, Tina Sanders on behalf of Eric Mackey, Vera Hendrix on behalf of John Mascia, and Suzanne Bruton on behalf of Chris Stewart. Also in attendance was Anna McConnell, State Autism Coordinator.

The minutes from the October 21, 2019 meeting were approved and adopted.

(Interim Co-Chair) Dr. Justin Schwartz opened the meeting noting the renewed enthusiasm and continued creation of alignment around key issues in collaborative ways.

Lead Agency Comments: Dr. Eliza Belle, on behalf of ADMH, noted that there is a new Community Waiver program being proposed. These waivers are hoped to expand the group that can receive services and the type of services, as the ID waiver has typically been more restrictive. More descriptions are available on the [ADMH website](#) and specifically on the [Concept Paper link](#). Services are targeted for those more at risk for residential services, looking at adaptive skills. A letter to providers and public comment are pending. Those currently on the Living at Home and Intellectual Disability Waivers will continue to receive services from those funding streams, unless they would like to move to the new waiver program; however, new applicants will only be placed on the Community Waiver program.

State Coordinator Comments: Anna McConnell noted that the annual report is pending and will be sent out. The AIACC Strategic Plan that was approved during the last Council meeting will be available online.

**New Business:**

*Standards of Practice: Ages 0-5*

Dr. Fred Biasini noted that the work group has been focusing on screeners for Early Intervention to use for children in their services to identify children earlier and allow for better access to diagnostics. They are also looking at the use of screeners to allow for eligibility to EI.

*Standards of Practice: Ages 6-13*

Dr. Heather Jones reported that there had not been significant changes since the last presentation of the strategic planning updates. It was identified that psychiatry services for students in this age group are particularly lacking, as those with an ASD diagnosis cannot be served at Community Mental Health Centers (ASD is an exclusionary diagnosis).

*Standards of Practice: Ages 14-20*

Dr. Erich Grommet noted that the workgroup has a standing committee meeting time for continued work. Troy University is also working toward a Master's program for ABA.

*Standards of Practice: Ages 21+*

Dr. Sarah Ryan noted that there will be an upcoming meeting for this group via Zoom.

*Standards of Practice: Diagnostics and Health*

Dr. Justin Schwartz noted that he found the new [AAP Guidelines for ASD](#) to be thorough and well structured. It references that diagnostic work can be generalized to pediatricians with their capabilities to provide the diagnosis. It includes guidance related to healthcare disparities and may help with advocacy moving forward. All committees are encouraged to read the document. The Guidelines also align with current recommendations regarding identification, screening, etc. that has already come from the committee.

Anna McConnell noted that part of the role of the various committees is to develop recommendations for improving the system of care in Alabama. This may or may not come attached to a funding request. Funding requests should be made in the spring/summer to be included in the funding requests from state agencies, that is then sent to the Governor's Office, which is sent to the legislature. Funding requests must also go through the AIACC Executive Committee for approval, in addition to full Council approval.

Suzanne Dowling recommended that the first funding request include the Regional Autism Networks, as much of the recommendations in the Strategic Plan include utilizing that resource and the development of a website.

### *Regional Autism Networks*

Amy Mitchell reported on behalf of the Regional Autism Network sites. She noted that three of the five sites (USA – Dana Handmacher, UA – Tammy Barkey, and AU – Maria Gutierrez). This role is filled by a family member of someone with ASD who can offer more targeted guidance for families calling seeking assistance. Their lived experience has proven a valuable asset to the RAN and people they serve, and the positions were made possible by some one-time additional funding. Continued growth in funding is needed to continue these positions. Elizabeth Griffith (former UAB RAN Director) has taken a new position at the School of Public Health and the UA RAN Director position is also available and posted. The RAN is working on a data portal that we hope to be up and running April 1, 2020.

### **Other Announcements**

Marc Williams noted that the Behavior Analyst Licensing Board is entering into the first renewal cycle for licensure. There are just under 300 LBAs in the state. There is a new mailing address and contact information on the [website](#).

Robert Caldwell noted that he is the web designer for the AAPN website.

Anna McConnell introduced new ADMH Autism Services staff, including Intake Specialist Karmelia Brown. The data that is collected as we roll out services, in addition to the data collected by RAN will hopefully be used to show gaps and needs in services, as well as to capture a better snapshot of Autism in Alabama. The data collected may be of use to committees in forming recommendations.

Tametria Conner noted that her organizations, DATS MOM, has served 150 families and partnered with a number of agencies for one site and in home training. She is working with the Montgomery Airport for Spectrum Sky for air travel experience for those on the Autism Spectrum.

Vera Hendrix noted that AIDB is looking for a consultant to help them serve clients who are Deaf and/or Blind and have ASD and/or IDD. If interested or know of someone who could fill this role, contact [Hendrix.vera@aidb.org](mailto:Hendrix.vera@aidb.org).

Courtney Klotz from the Renaissance School of the Eastern Shore shared a flyer about a voucher for private schools and a proposed bill in the Alabama Legislature.

Maria Gutierrez announced an upcoming coffee chat in partnership with Troy University and Autism Society of Alabama. The speakers will discuss respite and Medicaid availability of services.

When a question about accommodations at universities based on ASD diagnosis, it was noted that ADRS provides testing at no cost.

A Child Psychiatrist at Children's of Alabama noted the difficulties for those with ASD and other diagnoses to access psychiatry services. ASD is an exclusionary diagnosis at Community Mental Health Centers, thereby greatly reducing the access to already low numbers of psychiatry providers in the state. The number of barriers to access psychiatry is great in Alabama. It was also noted that This is an issue that the Diagnostics and Health Committee will work towards addressing.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Next meeting: Monday, April 13, 2020

Recording Secretary

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A. McConnell